

North Carolina

Creating Healthier Child Care Centers

Public Health Problem

More than half of all adults in North Carolina are overweight or obese, and almost one-third of high school students are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. Making positive changes in nutrition and physical activity behaviors among pre-school-age children is a way to preempt the growth of this epidemic in the state.

Taking Action

The Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP-SACC) is a pilot intervention in child care centers aimed at improving nutrition and physical activity environments and practices through self-assessment and targeted technical assistance. The intervention, a crucial part of the North Carolina Healthy Weight Initiative and created in partnership with the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was implemented in six counties throughout the state, with two additional counties serving as controls. After completing a self-assessment, the child care center director, with assistance from a Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC), identified at least three areas for improvement. The CCHC and the center worked together over six to nine months to improve and enhance their respective center's environment using a resource manual and continuing education workshops developed by the NAP-SACC team. Three 30-minute workshops were developed by NAP-SACC that covered childhood overweight, healthy eating, and physical activity. Then, both quantitative and qualitative evaluations were performed to gauge the effectiveness of the NAP-SACC intervention.

After the centers assessed their nutrition and physical activity environments, technical assistance was provided on ways to make positive improvements, such as enhanced access to physical activity through purchase of additional equipment or creation of additional indoor/outdoor play space. With regards to nutrition, these improvements included activities such as increasing the availability of fruit and vegetables, reducing use of fried foods, reducing use of sugar-sweetened beverages, and introducing overall nutrition policies in individual centers.

Implications and Impact

The NAP-SACC workshops were attended by 122 staff members from centers in six counties. An evaluation of the pilot concluded that NAP-SACC helps child care centers improve their nutrition and physical activity environments and policies, as demonstrated through the NAP-SACC self-assessment data as well as an analysis of interview and focus group data. The evaluation also suggested that nutrition and physical activity interventions benefit from parental involvement and linguistic inclusiveness.

Based on progress made through NAP-SACC, there are plans to establish the intervention in child care centers throughout the state, develop a large-scale evaluation of NAP-SACC to assess child-specific changes in behavior as a result of the project, and develop a similar project targeting infants.

Contact Information

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North Carolina

Healthwise Partnership Promotes Physical Activity for WISEWOMAN Participants in Winston-Salem

Public Health Problem

In many communities, underserved, at-risk women may not have opportunities to be physically active because of cost and access barriers to physical activity programs or facilities.

Taking Action

The Healthwise program, funded by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust and the WISEWOMAN Program, provides health education, counseling, and referrals to at-risk WISEWOMAN clients. As part of their counseling, clients are encouraged to become more physically active. Community partners collaborated to offer Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) scholarships to help women in need become more physically active. The scholarships allow women to purchase membership at a substantially reduced cost. Participants may purchase a one-month membership for \$5 versus the regular \$30 cost. Scholarships are incentives that encourage WISEWOMAN participants to engage in physical activity, and they recruit women into the program.

WISEWOMAN clients have their blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked at the Forsyth County Department of Public Health. Women receive counseling about healthy diets, physical activity, smoking cessation, and stress management. An individualized physical activity plan is developed for each client by the Healthwise program coordinator. After clients answer health questions and obtain physician approval to participate in the physical activity programs, YWCA scholarships can be offered.

Women who receive YWCA scholarships must attend an orientation to learn about the exercise equipment or attend classes at the YWCA. At a minimum, participants are required to engage in physical activity at least twice a week for a six-month period. The Healthwise coordinator monitors attendance and provides feedback and motivation for women at follow-up visits. WISEWOMAN offers ongoing support and motivation and fosters a supportive environment among participants.

Implications and Impact

Through access to Healthwise and the YWCA, WISEWOMAN clients have opportunities to become more physically active, lose weight, increase their stamina, and better control their blood pressure and cholesterol levels. The program has removed cost and access barriers that were preventing underserved women in the community from being physically active. This outreach strategy has attracted more women to the WISEWOMAN Program. At the organizational level, partnerships were formed with other agencies and increased the chances that these services will be sustained in the community.

Contact Information

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